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June 2, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chair Pro Tem
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Supervisor Don Knabe

From: David Sanders, Ph.D. 
Director

**DECEMBER 6, 2005 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #16 RE: MISSING CHILDREN
MONTHLY UPDATE**

On December 6, 2005, your Board directed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to reconvene the Missing Children Task Force in order to continue in the identification and refinement of practices for the prevention and recovery of runaways; and to report back on a monthly basis with status updates on the following:

- I. Existing Countywide and community-specific services and programs, including the support that the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post can provide;
- II. Improved maintenance of the DCFS Missing Children Website;
- III. Enhancement of the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to provide specialized support for runaways;
- IV. Consideration of using the Permanency Partners Program (P-3), and;
- V. Addressing the issues that have been raised by youth who have been or are in care of the Department through corrections and modifications to the Department's policy.

UPDATES

- The Runaway Adolescent Program (RAP) team has been conducting extensive analysis on the runaway population. Thus far a total of 50% of the cases in 10 offices have been concluded. Specific findings will be outlined in greater detail below.

- The refinement of reporting runaway episodes continues. To date departmental workgroups have completed the training curriculum needed to bring regional office staff up to consistent standard regarding ARKs data entry. The utility of this exercise is consistent with the directive of providing expeditious, quantifiable departmental information on runaways. Upon the completion of training all regional offices will have the capability to access and input data into the ARKs system.
- There have been no Task Force meetings held since May 3rd. The next meeting is scheduled for June 22, 2006. The content of the meeting will be detailed in a subsequent Board report.

CURRENT STATUS

I. Existing County-wide and community-specific services and programs, including the support that the DCFS Emergency Response Command Post can provide:

The Departments Emergency Response Command Post continues to monitor for runaway youth. That division has also been charged with documenting special circumstances, needs, etc., of that population. The information is being used to facilitate enhanced regional office Team Decision-Making (TDM's) efforts and permanent placement options.

The Runaway Adolescent Program (RAP) staff has done extensive profiling of the Runaway population thus far. Presently they have completed detailed histories of 50% of the Runaway population in 10 of the 18 regional offices. The findings will assist departmental planning. (Major ones detailed below.)

- Repeat Runaway – Information shows that over 60% of the population have repeat runaway episodes.
- Substance Abuse – Information shows that over 50% of the population have admitted to the use of controlled substances.
- Mental Health needs – Information shows that 40% of the population have documented mental health information, including visits and/or hospitalizations.
- Teen Pregnancies – Information shows that 30% of the population are or have recently been pregnant and will return to court-ordered care to access pre-natal and/or infant medical care.

Please note that information is preliminary and based upon analysis of the data on the Runaway population, beginning January 1, 2006.

II. Improved maintenance of the DCFS Missing Children Web site:

Improvements continue to be made on the ARKs web site. Improvements include:

- Enhanced data entry capabilities
- Training staff on updated technology
- Training staff on enhanced Runaway definition

Additionally, the task force members have engaged in discussions about the "break out" groupings for the Runaways. We are currently working through sub-committees on various ways in which the Department can adequately code those "sub-categories" of youth. One of the categories would include denoting youth that are in a runaway status yet "whereabouts" are known. For example, we are finding many youth whom once "placed" again by the Department run back to unauthorized placements. We are in receipt of such information through case documentation upon social workers repeated attempts to complete visits, locate youth, etc. Additionally, through best efforts to locate Runaways social workers frequently speak with family members, extended kin, etc., and receive corroborating information.

III. Enhancement of the DCFS Child Protection Hotline to provide specialized support for runaways:

We remain committed to working with various jurisdictions via the Hotline. Through the practice of mining cases we have found that many of our youth run to other counties and are taking up 'unauthorized' residency. These counties include San Bernardino, Riverside, and Orange County. In addition, the social workers are finding (through contact with family members) that youth have relocated to other countries, including Mexico and Guadalajara. As a result of this information the Department is looking at policy revisions which will allow us to appropriately document 'best efforts' at locating these youth by maintaining regular contact with the appropriate jurisdictions.

IV. Consideration of using the Permanency Partners Program (P-3):

As outlined in the March 1, 2006 Board report, all runaways are now referred to P-3 staff. A follow-up report will be made to your Board upon any changes regarding this initiative.

V. Addressing the issues that have been raised by youth who have been or are in care of the Department through corrections and modifications to the Department's policy.

The Youth Concerns sub-committee continues to meet and as reported prior offer up recommendations. The following recommendations have been acted upon:

Identify a means of tracking repeat runaways – through the work of departmental sub-committees repeat runaway episodes are being tracked. The RAP/SOS unit now has primary responsibility for quantifying such information regularly. The information will be used specifically to assist P-3 workers in their efforts to locate and permanently place repeat Runaways.

Flexibility in placement to allow for a more normal experience – The Department has implemented the strategy of Team Decision-Making (TDM's). The effort allows a forum by which to more appropriately tailor care for this population of youth. In addition, Deputy Directors are providing on-going direction which includes information on incorporating specific strategies for engaging this population. Additionally, the Bureau of Resources is in receipt of specific information on the Runaway population. The linkage will assist in accessing resources specifically tailored to dealing with Runaway youth.

CONCLUSION

DCFS will continue to explore concerns, strategies and proven outcomes as they relate to the Runaway population. The analysis being conducted by RAP will allow us to further define additional resources and strategies. Additionally, the work being done through the Task Force and its sub-committees will also provide guided and expert direction. It is in this spirit that we will continue to report our efforts with regard to the Runaway population.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact me, or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Board Relations Manager at (213) 351-5530.

DS:AS:vm

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Office
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Abducted & Runaway Foster Childrens System (ARKS)
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON RUNAWAY CHILDREN SERVICED BY DCFS
June 1, 2006

Category	Totals / Subtotal	Percent	Comments
Runaway DCFS Foster Children as reported in ARKS System	437		
Age			
0-9 years old	0	0%	
10-13 years old	21	5%	
14-17 years old	416	95%	Majority are teenagers 14-17
	437		
Gender			
Female	310	71%	More girls than boys runaway
Male	127	29%	
	437		
Ethnicity			
American Indian	2	0%	
Black	114	26%	
Asian/Pacific Islander	10	2%	
Hispanic/Latino	257	59%	
White	54	12%	
	437		
Placement Type			
Foster Home	213	49%	
Group Home	145	33%	
Relative/Guardian Home	71	16%	
(Not Indicated)	8	2%	
	437		
Location of CSW			
SPA 1 Lancaster	11	3%	
SPA 1 Palmdale	17	4%	
SPA 2 North Hollywood	30	7%	
SPA 2 Santa Clarita	13	3%	
SPA 3 Glendora	36	8%	
SPA 3 Pasadena	19	4%	
SPA 3 Pomona	16	4%	
SPA 4 Metro North	48	11%	
SPA 5 West Los Angeles	14	3%	
SPA 6 Century	24	8%	
SPA 6 Compton	24	5%	
SPA 6 Hawthorne	11	3%	
SPA 6 Wateridge	43	10%	
SPA 7 Belvedere	36	8%	
SPA 7 Santa Fe Springs	27	6%	
SPA 8 Lakewood	32	7%	
SPA 8 Torrance	18	4%	
Adoptions	3	1%	
Specialized Programs	15	3%	
(Not Indicated)	0	0%	
	437		